



It Will  
Always  
Be.  
Like  
This:



Andy  
Hopkins

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## **Acknowledgements and Notes**

Thank you to Larrie for everything, but especially for editing the poems in this chapbook – and designing the cover image.

Thank you to Justin Sullivan, of New Model Army, for allowing the lyrics of the song ‘Here Comes the War’ from the 1993 album ‘The Love of Hopeless Causes’ to be used as the epigraph tying the chapbook together.

### **At the EDF Rally**

*The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* by John Martin is part of the permanent collection at The Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle. It is part of the Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums collection. Ironically, as this chapbook goes to print the painting will be part of the John Martin ‘Apocalypse Now’ exhibition at the Tate in London from 21 September 2011 to 15 January 2012. However, *usually* it’s on permanent display in Newcastle where there is no charge to view it, or anything else in the permanent collection. For further information see Barbara C. Morden’s book *John Martin: Apocalypse Now*, published by Northumbria Press, 2010.

Tacitus’s *The Histories* can be found online easily, but a better translation is by W.H. Fyfe, Oxford World Classics, 1997.

### **Protect and Survive**

‘*Protect and Survive*’ was a publication and series of twenty short information films from the British government in the 1980s. The films with such titles as ‘*Make Your Fall-out Room and Refuge Now*’ can be viewed on YouTube, should you wish to scare yourself silly.

‘*The Importance of Schools: The Schools White Paper 2010*’ can be downloaded from <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/CM%207980>; make yourself a fall-out room and refuge now.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s two works *The Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* both form *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* by Brian Massumi published by The Athlone Press, 1988, is the one cited in the epigraph of the poem.

### **The Rothko Room**

‘The Seagram Murals’ were a set of paintings by Mark Rothko, originally part of a commission to be viewed as the decoration for a restaurant. They are brought together in Tate Modern, on Level 3 - ‘Material Gestures’; it is labelled as room 3. The Seagram Murals are on permanent display and there is no charge to see it, or anything else in the Tate’s permanent collection.

‘Drift’ is the playful *dérive* concept, much vaunted, and little understood although often explained. It is ‘active observation of present day urban agglomeration’, or a ‘passionate

uprooting through the hurried change of environments' to study how these have influenced 'emotions like friendship and love' as defined by Guy Debord in his 'Report on the Construction of Situations'. For further information avoid *The Society of the Spectacle*, but try *The Situationist City*, Simon Sadler, The MIT Press, 1998.

'Did you think we were born in peaceful times?'  
Justin Sullivan

## At the EDF Rally



‘The story I now commence is a history of a period rich in disasters, frightful in its wars, torn by civil strife, and even in peace full of horrors.’ Tacitus, *The Histories*, Book I.  
‘Likewise as it was in the days of Lot—they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold.’ [Luke 17:28-30](#)

### I: Ante-

Look at the painting *Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*, by John Martin.

God’s eye. Milk and blood.  
Toppling currencies. Spiteful  
provincial judgment.

### II: Anti- (Outside the Train Station)

*Coming out of Central Station on a day trip we blunder into the middle of a ranked and assembled EDF demonstration.*

It will always be. Like this:  
a flaccid putsch of men pour out of trains into the greasy air.  
Scalp skin shines, wet; sour, faecal sneers pass  
person-to-person, like spittle on a bottle.

It will always be. Like this:  
cans, bottles swigged; dumped, crushed. Detritus  
truths are ugly; none uglier than the rancid truths of people  
whose lolling, leaden led-tongues are drunk and angry. Ready.

It will always be. Like this:  
either a glum Munich beer hall, huddling early Christians;  
or here - arid hairlines penitent in drizzle;  
hate is the only thing that can eat itself and live.

It will always be. Like this:  
liquor and inaction on the streets – sullen gaggles-  
boredom at the heart of the brawl.  
Complex uncertainties are no match for a thug narrative.

It will always be. Like this:  
urban, ashen bystanders; wrath and sloth.  
Chants. Cracked glass. Those that ‘understand’ don’t  
understand and scratch false futures from Sibylline leaves

stamped onto the streets of sodden Gomorrah.  
It will always be like this.

### **III: Anti- (Outside the Metro Station)**

In the centre of town, clustered beneath Grey’s Monument (where the inscription reads ‘After a century of civil peace...’) there is a counter-demonstration. Various unions have paid for a stage and music. People give out flyers and hold out petitions. Then EDF marchers appear.

Here’s my enemy’s enemy. All friends:

half a band, half a song, half an amiable  
rabble soberly babbling, placid placards - leaflets.  
A banner. It is calm here. Different:  
but the bearded moral high ground is damp;

a fragile motif dislocates itself across flagstones,  
echoing off the drab city; it tells of subordinated worlds  
and one stamped out by the English tongues lapping it up–  
an irony fit for the decline and fall of empires;

declines are full of denials, and parades.  
Our unions trade in pacifistic warmongering:  
the literate well-meaning are always drawing in the sand,  
when They arrive, teeth gnashing, knives flashing.

When the sky darkens it is going to happen.  
It is going to happen for a long time.  
Then it happens. From alleys and nooks,

the city spews white spite street-ward

from behind bins black-eyed white men  
manifest, converging - congealing on the square.  
Then Police. Then dogs. Then struggle.  
Something thrown. Something sworn. Divide.

We are where we have always been;  
we populate elegiac histories - always the same;  
it will always be like this;  
so, imagine for a second that this is Rome.

There are pompously lidless grey statues – like this –  
Corinthian pillars raising their fists to God – like this –  
moneylenders twittering in the arcades - like this -  
stone, colonial merchants – like this –

and therefore – like this -

oedipal Vandals (army veterans, inbred loyalists from the hills)  
whose pinkly tonsured parents had vein-blue tattoos, too,  
and mistook malice for intelligence:

They loitered. They littered. They infought.  
They delighted in Imperial vices. Tacitus  
(*plebs sordida, vulgus imperitum, inops vulgus*)

hated Them in triplicate. They -like this- razed  
the civil cruelty of the statues; They sack  
and scream 'You're dead' at those claiming to have 'read' Marx

back in the neoclassical; the police descend. Deadlocking, yellow,  
praetorian, plastic safety nets us – relieving and disappointing:  
the matter unsettled. Capitalistic, fascistic authority

leaves the choice between two unwashed truths:  
tie-dye, straggly baggy multiplicitous simulacra,  
or the singular jackboot of plural uniform.

A leaning policeman asks 'Whose side are you on?'  
(You force me to choose art, then.)  
I'm on the side of the paintings of John Martin.

#### **IV: On Looking at *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* Alone in the Empty Gallery**

*The policeman asks 'Whose side are you on?' We didn't realise there were only two, but we don't say that. We also don't say that that was nearly the title of an Auden poem; instead we wander up towards the Laing Art Gallery.*

This isn't class war. This is a war against  
the time it takes to think. Vacant galleries  
whisper so much, when riots yell nothing.  
But mute art tracts are intractable,  
complex; simpler economic truths follow  
each other home and smash each others' faces  
in, in northern towns under crimson skies.  
Bloody, classical omens. Angels. Angels,  
the fault's these usurious, sadistic streets  
built pound-for-pound on inchoative greed -  
above the riot, profit's made from poverty:  
our anima is lust for dust; I fear  
the city stones cemented racist mores  
the endemic hatreds and human flaws.

#### **V: At the Bigg Market**

We take a walk towards the Bigg Market. There is a cataclysm of noise, but the police have a huge wedge between the two protests. Nothing is clear. We can only see policemen. Police dogs bark in parallel lines of vans. You can hear the loudhailers leading the chants

the people [.] united [.] will never be defeated [.]  
the people [.] united [.] will never be defeated [.]  
the people [.] united [.] will never be defeated [.]

#### **VI: At Grey's Monument**

We sit in a cafe. The city shops, open all day, now begin to close as night comes on. We watch the street for hours, hours later. The national press does not report the demonstration.

Dumb civic cleaning trucks  
whine and wind in wide widening circles:

for a dread moment the pavement sheen reflects and remembers,  
but the soothing rattling prattle of the machine drones that

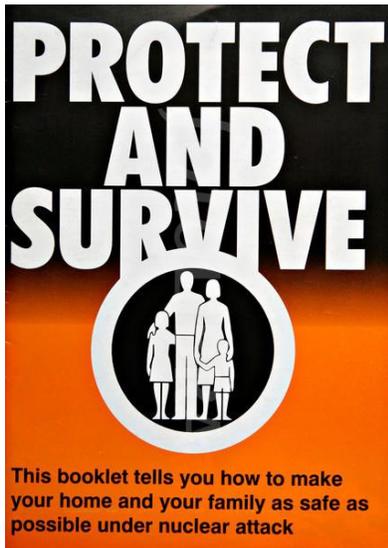
nothing has happened here nothing has  
happened here nothing has happened here  
nothing has happened here nothing has  
happened here nothing has happened here.

## **VII: post-**

We look back at the cityscape as the train leaves.

Tinderbox vista;  
livid sky; light fails; blight falls.  
History repeats cycle.

## Protect and Survive



‘Language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, and compel obedience.’

(Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Ch.3, p. 76)

### **i: Vacuous Words Found in a Nuclear Bunker**

threat front N/ re-entry body/  
air burst 9/ first fallout 8/  
bikini black alpha/ bikini black state/  
nuclear burst all stations,/CARLisle (western sector)/

### **ii: Vacuous Words Found in a School Curriculum Meeting**

cohort/ SEN/ ADHT/ contextual CVA/  
Alt.Curric/ non-verbal CAT / NEET /SEF/  
non-contextual CVA/ BTEC/ E-Bacc/  
LACE/ Pre-Voc/ Cumbria LA/

### **1: Abstract**

What protects? The language of power.  
What survives? The language of power.

## **2: Thesis**

And the language of power  
invisibly survives. And always did,  
scuttling to the margins, out of the spotlight, burying itself, peeping  
between the smoking boulders  
or over the shoulder,  
leeching into our water;  
virulent: scuttling up  
the cockroach war machine: the brilliant idiot cleverness  
of its metallic perfect nouns. It's digital verbs. Penetrative.  
Warping. Hacking. Moulding. Forming. Educating.

And the language of power, warring with living words,  
is much like a murder of crows  
when rattled; it takes wing from the vulture branches of government  
overlooking us  
and soars into the future, clacking its cicada reasons  
over the radio static in the Fall-Out Room: the reasons  
nobody believes  
in, but we all acquiesce  
to. Its wisps reshape,  
hyperdeadlyreal, in the rafters  
of a ruined unnamed compound a hundred thousand miles from here.

It is the last voice you will ever hear;

it's formed from the sibilant sinuous twists  
of slight sonic lament and the nothingness  
that our votes create from somethings and someones  
we will never look in the eye, or see laugh.  
In the future their dead will not exist. They never did.  
And we never did.  
The language of power does.

## **3: Antithesis**

I stand in my classroom. And I know.  
I know my words aren't enough, because

they are paltry, salvaged ,words made from pellets  
spat, shat, hawked out of the power language's maw.  
And I am one cell of the maw; inside my cell walls

I am nuclei, one of billions, my punctuation ridiculous.

And the language of power  
drops vowels and word endings  
from its beak, labelling,  
spattering acronyms onto rooftops in the next continent;  
revising, anonymising  
punching pauses, dashes and ever-ellipses into text...  
...a broken, caesura framework of bulletholes,  
of colons rupturing colons, rattling down guttering,  
passing into the food chain;  
clauses as random as causes  
(and random as its reasons) gather in the heavens,  
sowing rain and thunder;

subclauses sub-  
standard and sub-  
ordinate, float like snowy cinders over  
the incomplete, partial remains of the newly deformed, gathering on  
pieces of paper attached to the toes of bare feet in the street;  
names inked on teeth hoed from the soil in years to come;  
names – empty, real as gravestones and as forgotten as an eroded ode  
on a gravestone, all just bones, bones, bones:  
the pounded dust of bones. Our living language is military bones:  
the vacuous bleating of authority ossified.  
This ossified lexis, much like a murder of crows,  
comes unhomey home to roost  
uncanny in our curricula. It is not *our* language  
and it is *our* fault.

#### **4: Synthesis**

I stand in my classroom and I know

that the kids that don't stand for my small word rules  
will stand in line, over-ground and in the ground, salute,  
kow tow, kill. Those that swear at me  
will swear allegiance  
to language's flags, protocols  
and white papers. Language was ready for them.  
Language protects and survives: protects  
with the toys, tools, camouflage,  
pension plan, time-sheet, rotas,  
and winding sheet  
of power.

But it only protects itself; language survives its host users  
- even the oratorical parasites -  
and especially the language of power:  
the you're-either-with-us-or-against-us language.

My little teaching words, my word machines, my little dialects,  
are no competition: they are  
the authority of no authority,  
the compulsion of not being compelled,  
and that is not enough.

I stand. In my classroom. And I know.

## The Rothko Room

The 'drift' was: SW6 to EC4M (by bus, then underground). EC4M to SE1 (on foot). SE1 to WC2N (on foot, then bus). WC2N to W1J (on foot). W1J to WC1 (underground, then train).



### 1 (after, WC1)

How much foregrounding can you take?

You. ('Me?') Yes, you.

How much do I need to tell you?

Me. ('You?') Yes, me.

Don't come to me for explanations,  
apologies, theses. I would give you faeces,  
not theories and exegeses...

...but I can show you the red,  
the absolute,  
the spaces.

### 2 (before, SW6)

London is finally fertile.  
There is blossom in with the guttering butts.  
Municipal bins are flowering.  
Waiters and gardeners move amongst us,  
administering.

We are all sterile talk  
for an arid hour, drink  
too much Ethiopian coffee, talk

infernal juvenilia and of Venezuela,  
paraphrasing *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

So in this slim moment between shifts,  
let's wander our dirty capital, yokeless.

### **3 (before, EC4M)**

So,  
I am  
liminally spinning in St Paul's  
- trapped inside the revolving door-  
in out in out  
in is out is in is out,  
whilst a service is being provided. Given, I mean  
maybe, free. Dizzying circles of exchange. Cycles of process. Flow. Value. Values.  
Valued. Big power in the big space with nothing in it,  
there is a lot of nothing in a church.  
From the heads of the dearly beloved  
to the whispering gallery there are acres of belief, a lebensraum.  
A microphone sermon pleas for prayers  
for the Christians in Jerusalem and the  
Christians in Palestine. Maybe they will go on to pray  
for the Christians in Afghanistan, or Baghdad, or the  
Christians in Pompeii, Ramallah, Jenin, or Djerba, or maybe  
the Christians that died in Belsen, Rwanda, Hiroshima.  
How about the Christians in campaign missionaries, positioned  
in places that just don't deserve them:

forgiving the forgiven, absolving solved;  
artlessly cursing this idolatrous world;  
*We seek that God should serve our mad appetites;*  
I think of a circus.  
(*A real one?*) A real one.  
(*Everywhere?*) Everywhere.

### **4 (just before, EC4M to SE1)**

But forget everything now. Now,  
we need to be forgiven. Now  
let's weave towards the river. Now:  
over the postcard river.  
Pilgrim, let's go

where the ghosts of turbines whirr,  
and drink skinny latte.  
Where the dead sweat, let's think  
in stained, glazed sunshine.  
In huge, hieratic spaces  
let's measure ourselves. Ascend.  
Leave our bodies. Transcend  
en masse. Grave. Sombre. Sublime.

A crowd of tourists flowed up and down the escalators, so many.  
I had not thought art had undone so many.

## **5 (that moment, SE1)**

this is  
the  
rothko room.  
it is  
all  
different  
reds  
the lights are low  
it is a  
dark  
room.

look!  
see  
andrew  
in the  
rothko room!  
there are  
paintings  
in  
the  
rothko  
room!

look!  
see  
andrew  
sadly sitting  
looking  
at  
rothko

paintings  
in the rothko  
room!

don't cry andrew.

## **6 (that moment, SE1)**

I've been here for twenty minutes  
and for the twenty years before that.

There's almost an aubade.  
Dawn windows without glass, geometry or light  
view out onto blood fog, as day breaks forever  
on a rolling horizon: this always-point  
is the caesura of the world.

They are periods of period,  
organic: of me like the thinking process, and  
inorganic: the result of thought.  
Dead thought. Dead thinking.

A gap in time where thinking was playing dead  
is now a whole in space where thinking is staying dead.

They are sirens.  
I rope myself to the seating  
and scream a contrapuntal little death.

They are the innards.  
I am inside.  
I am gristle in the innards.  
Irritant. Malignant. Impermanent.

## **7 (that moment and just after, SE1)**

Close off the red room,  
enclose me in heaven and in hell.  
Fence its colour fields,  
make it an absolute space.  
People keep coming  
with the dada scuttle of their possessions,  
sperm successes and egg families;

it disturbs my transformation,

but art has run its purgative course:  
I am weighed, purged and forgiven.  
These worship rooms are closing.  
Gather your things, pilgrim.  
My only possession is my stink.

I buy postcards later, though:  
queuing like everyone else  
for my relic replicas of the absences -  
pieces of the cross on credit- buying nothing  
with nothing; cupping my hands to possess it.

### **8 (later, WC2N – W1J)**

Later, calmer,  
the heart rate slower,  
Piccadilly is cold.  
Cold as church copper-per-per.

The poem leaves Turbine Hall  
and scuttles back across the map.  
I follow its trail down into the underground.  
I come to a decision under Nelson.

I can turn myself inside out,  
and you can read my entrails;

I can show you the red,  
the absolute,  
the spaces.

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For more information about Andy Hopkins, including Andy's first collection, *Dark Horse Pictures*, please visit **[www.philistinepress.com](http://www.philistinepress.com)**.